

Message Text

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0489

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV LA

SUBJECT: LAO GOVERNMENT SHIFTS

1. REPORTS CURRENTLY CIRCULATING IN VIENTIANE INDICATE THAT DEUAN SOUNNALATH, FORMERLY DEPUTY MINISTER (SECRETARY OF STATE) IN THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, HAS MOVED OVER TO BE DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE. OTHER REPORTED SHIFTS INCLUDE NOUPHFC SITHPASAY, FORMER DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MOVING TO THE LAO NATIONAL BANK AND THE GEMOVAL OF KHAMOUANE BOUPHA AS DEPUTY MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE.

2. DEUAN'S MOVE TO AGRICULTURE HAS PROMPTED THE MOST ANALYSIS AND SPECULATION. DEUAN, FORMERLY REGARDED AS A NEUTRALIST, FIRST APPEARED ON THE POLITICAL SCENE AS KONG LE'S TOP LIEUTENANT IN 1960 BUT LATER MOVED CLOSER TO THE PL AS A "DISSIDENT NEUTRALIST." HE HAS LONG HAD A REPUTATION FOR ENERGY AND COMPETENCE. MOVING SUCH A PERSON TO AGRICULTURE COULD BE A PRAGMATIC RECOGNITION OF THE FACT THAT UNLESS THE LPDR CAN GET ITS AGRICUL-
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TURAL SECTOR IN ORDER AND STEP UP PRODUCTION, THERE IS NOT MUCH HOPE FOR LAOS.

3. THERE IS ALSO SOME SPECULATION, HOWEVER, THAT DEUAN'S MOVE COULD BE PROMPTED BY A DESIRE TO GET AN EX-NEUTRALIST OUT OF A MINISTRY AS SENSITIVE AS INTERIOR. ANOTHER INTERPRETATION IS THAT A RECENT RE-

ORGANIZATION OF INTERIOR WOULD LEAVE THE CAPABLE DEUAN WITH LITTLE TO DO. INTERIOR IS REPORTEDLY TO LOSE THE FUNCTION OF SUPERVISING PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE WILL GAIN. SINCE THE LATTER OFFICE ALREADY HAS THE SECURITY SERVICES, NORMALLY AN INTERIOR FUNCTION, INTERIOR IS TO BE LEFT WITH ONLY ROUTINE POLICE FUNCTIONS. IF THESE REPORTS TURN OUT TO BE ACCURATE, THE ONCE POWERFUL INTERIOR MINISTRY WILL BE GREATLY REDUCED IN IMPORTANCE WHILE THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE WILL GAIN.

4. DEUAN IS REPORTEDLY TO BE APPOINTED AS ONLY DEPUTY AGRICULTURE MINISTER, THOUGH HE WILL BE MINISTER IN ALL BUT NAME. THE MINISTER, KHAMSOUK SAIGNASENG, IS SAID TO BE DUE FOR "RECYCLING," A PROCESS WHICH MIGHT INVOLVE AN EXTENDED PERIOD OUTSIDE OF LAOS.

5. WE HAVE HEARD LITTLE AS TO THE REASONS BEHIND KHAMOUANE'S REMOVAL. NOUPHAN WAS REPORTEDLY MOVED TO THE BANK IN ORDER TO GET RID OF THE INCUMBENT GOVERNOR, THONGCHANH OUPHAVAN, WHO WAS CONSIDERED INCOMPETENT. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THONGCHANH IS TO BE SENT ABROAD FOR STUDY.

ROBERTS

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